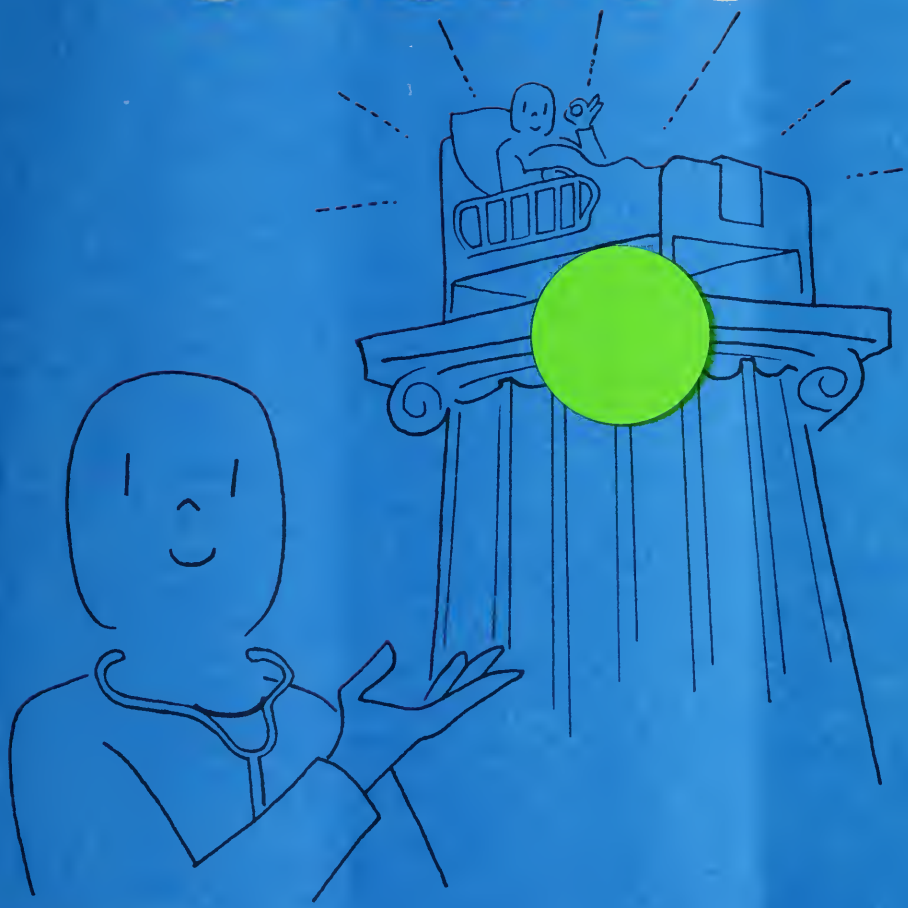
What you should know

ABOUT PATIENTS' RIGHTS



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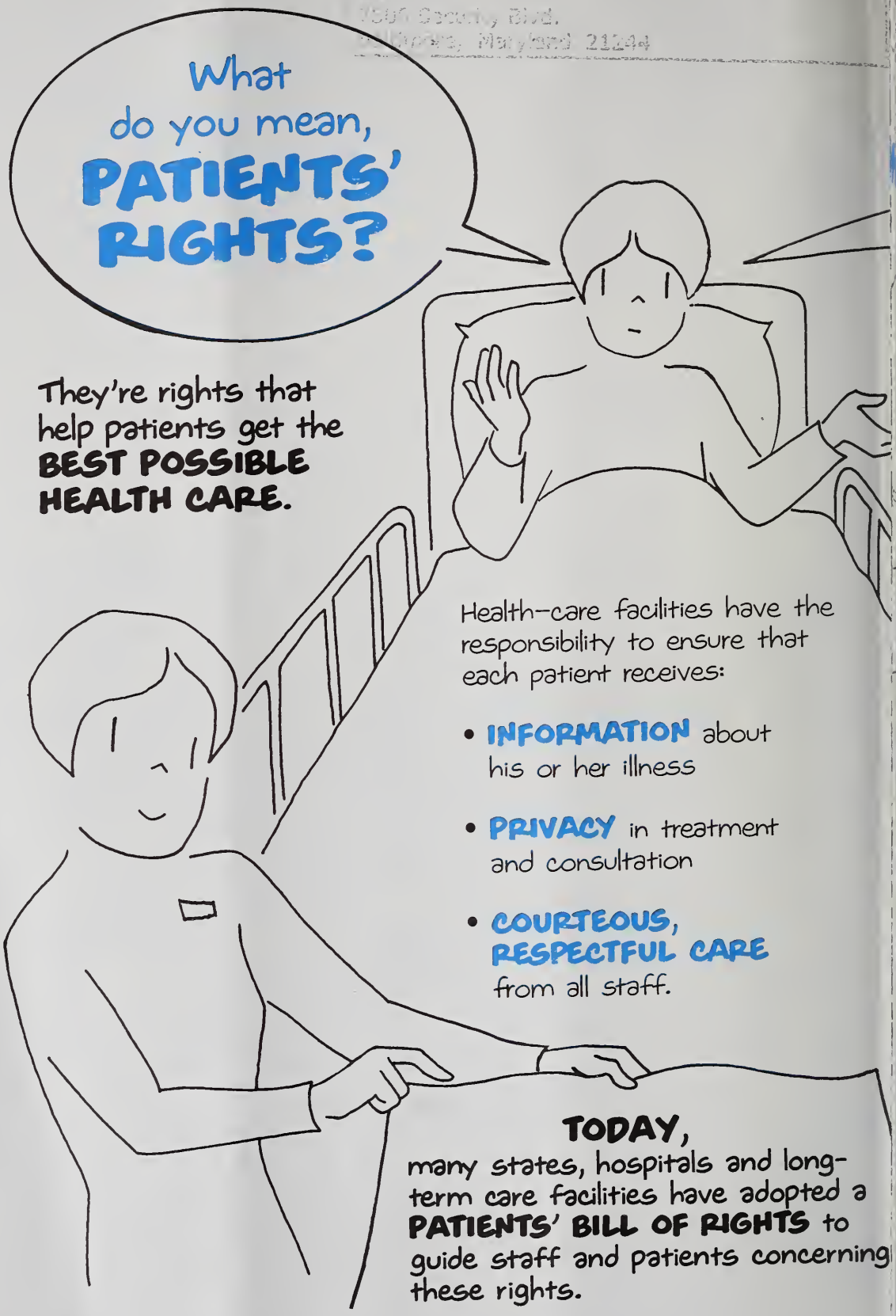

They're rights that help patients get the **BEST POSSIBLE HEALTH CARE.**

Health-care facilities have the responsibility to ensure that each patient receives:

- **INFORMATION** about his or her illness
- **PRIVACY** in treatment and consultation
- **COURTEOUS, RESPECTFUL CARE** from all staff.

TODAY, many states, hospitals and long-term care facilities have adopted a **PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS** to guide staff and patients concerning these rights.

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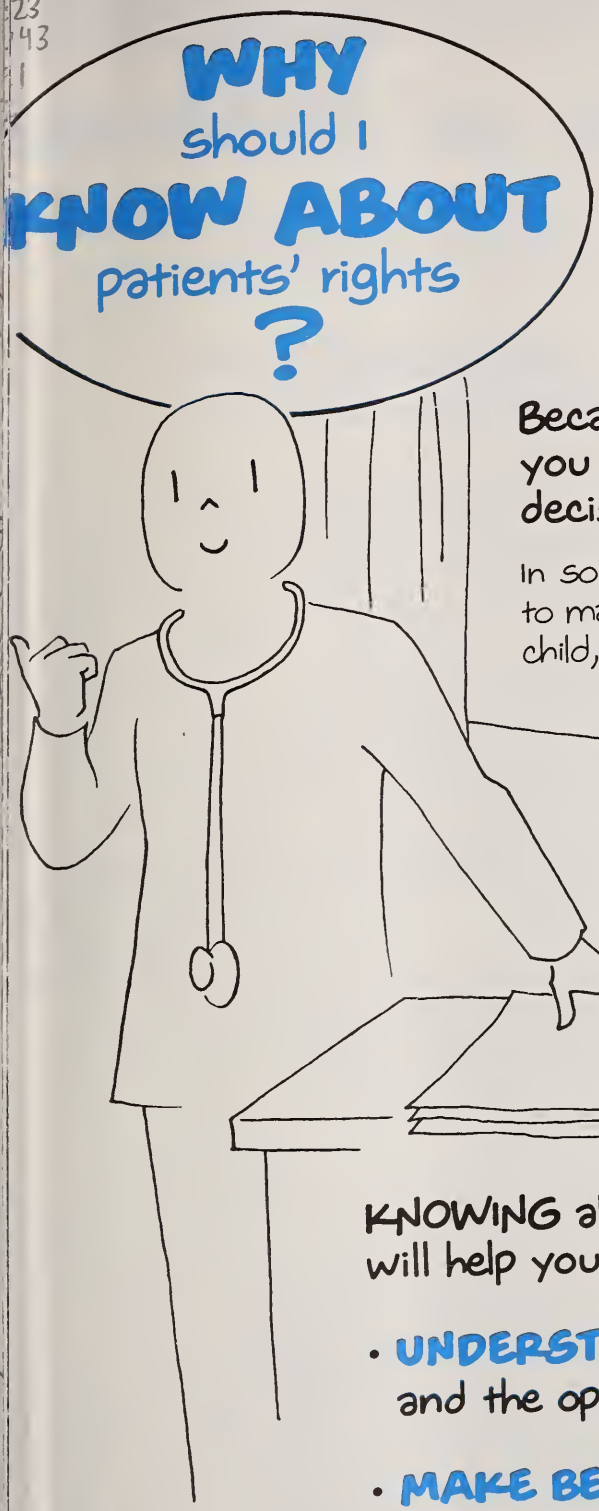


Because as a patient you may have to make decisions about treatment.

In some cases, you may have to make decisions for a parent, child, etc., who is a patient.

KNOWING about your rights will help you:

- **UNDERSTAND YOUR CONDITION** and the options for treatment
- **MAKE BETTER DECISIONS** about treatment, who should give it and where.

HERE ARE YOUR RIGHTS . . .

THE RIGHTS OF HOSPITAL

Different hospitals may use different approaches
Patients have the right to:

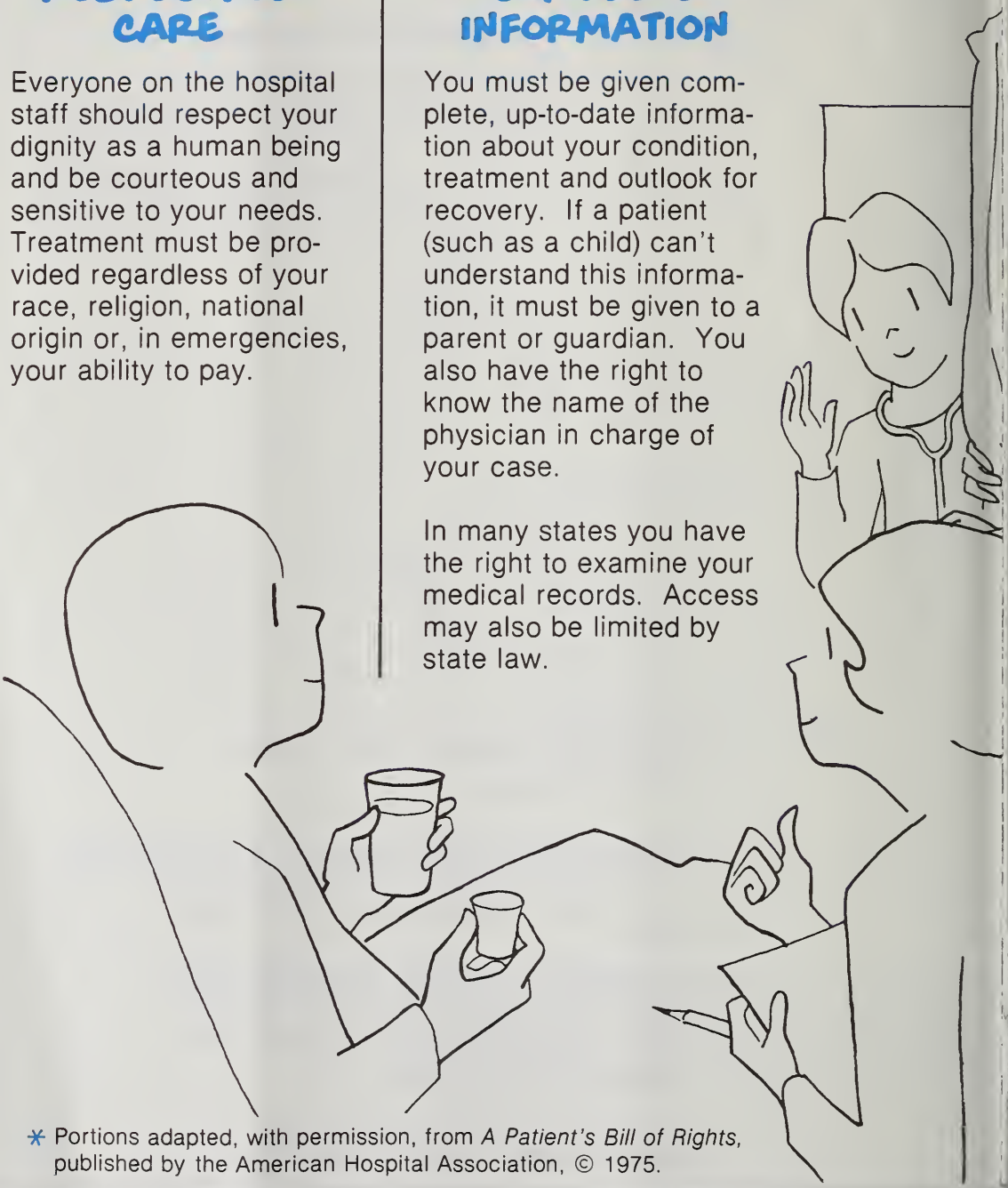
RESPECTFUL CARE

Everyone on the hospital staff should respect your dignity as a human being and be courteous and sensitive to your needs. Treatment must be provided regardless of your race, religion, national origin or, in emergencies, your ability to pay.

COMPLETE INFORMATION

You must be given complete, up-to-date information about your condition, treatment and outlook for recovery. If a patient (such as a child) can't understand this information, it must be given to a parent or guardian. You also have the right to know the name of the physician in charge of your case.

In many states you have the right to examine your medical records. Access may also be limited by state law.



* Portions adapted, with permission, from *A Patient's Bill of Rights*, published by the American Hospital Association, © 1975.

PATIENTS*

INFORMED CONSENT

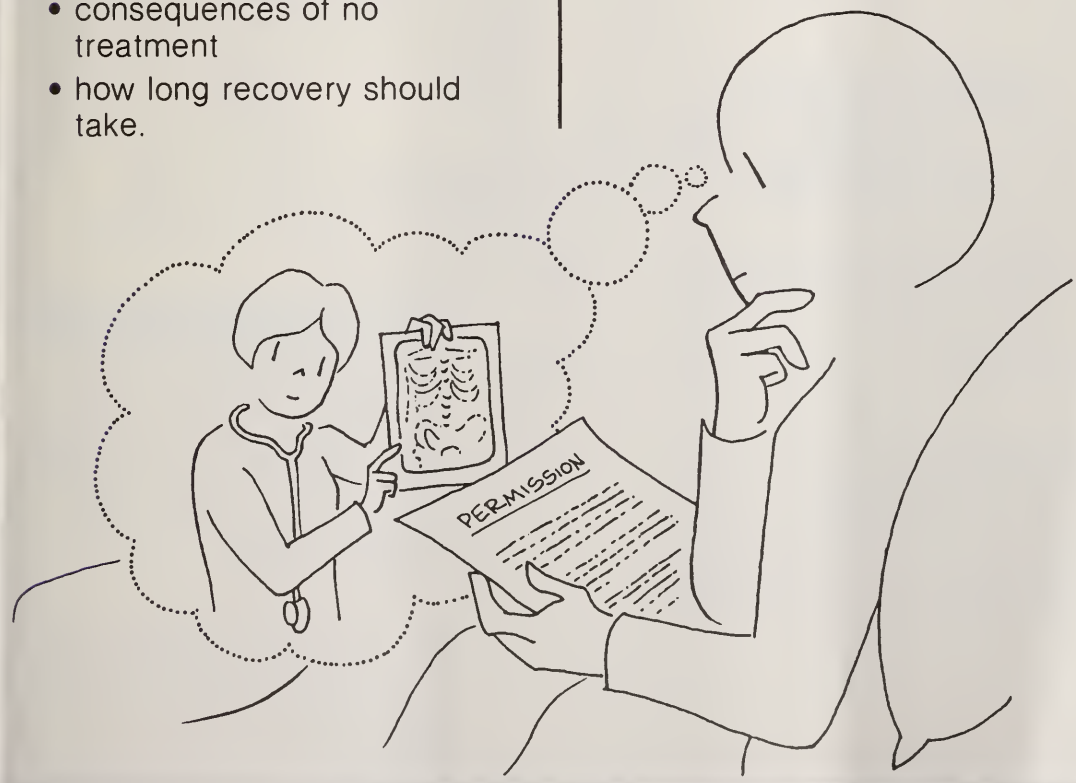
You must give permission for tests, surgery, medication, etc. Before you do this, your physician must tell you, in language you understand:

- the intended procedure or treatment
- any risks and side effects
- possible result(s) of treatment
- alternative treatments and possible side effects
- consequences of no treatment
- how long recovery should take.

REFUSE TREATMENT

If you're legally competent, you may choose not to be treated. In this case, your physician must tell you the possible consequences.

In some cases, some patients (such as those who are legally incompetent) may not refuse life-saving treatment.

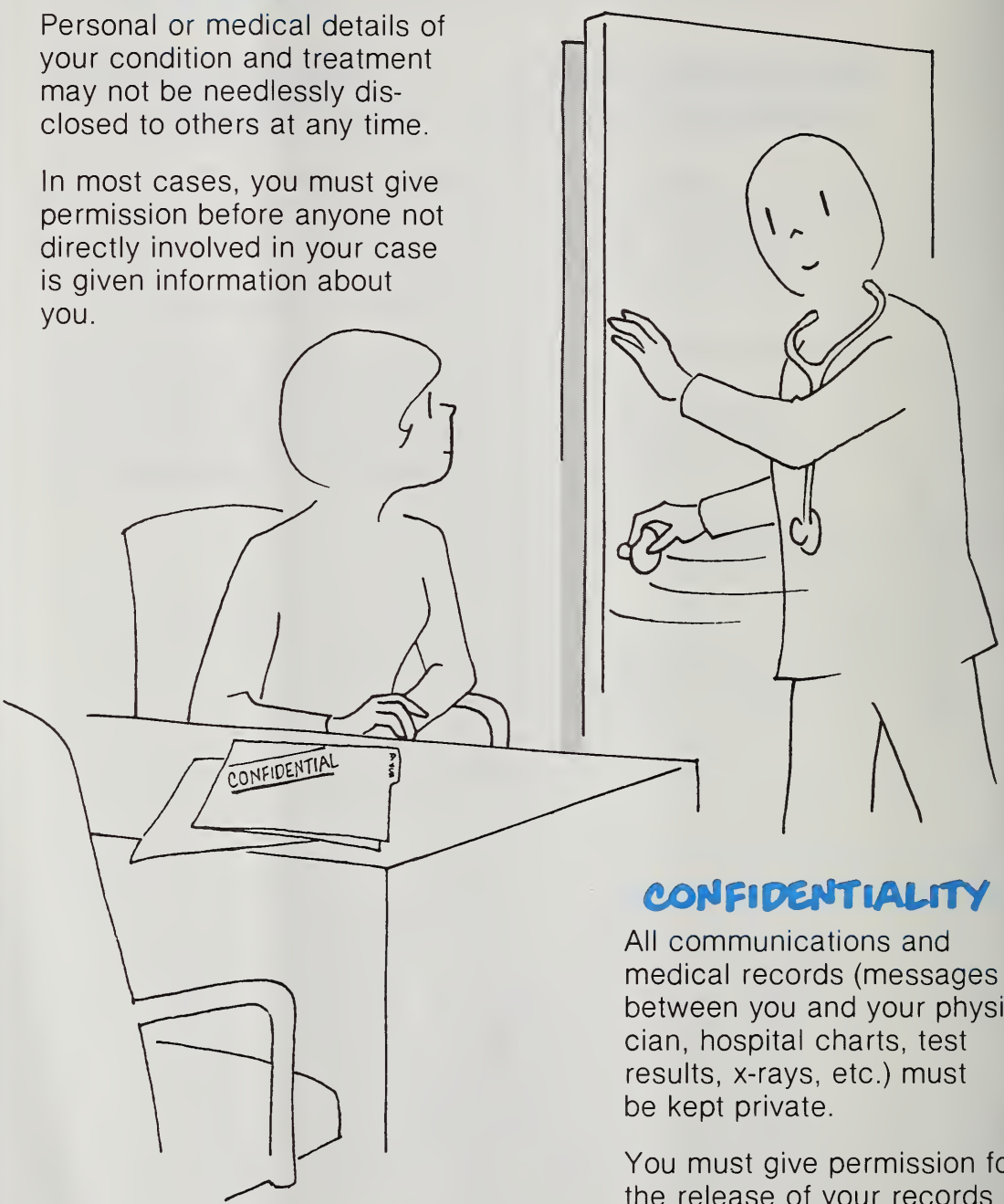


Patients have the right to:

PRIVACY

Personal or medical details of your condition and treatment may not be needlessly disclosed to others at any time.

In most cases, you must give permission before anyone not directly involved in your case is given information about you.



CONFIDENTIALITY

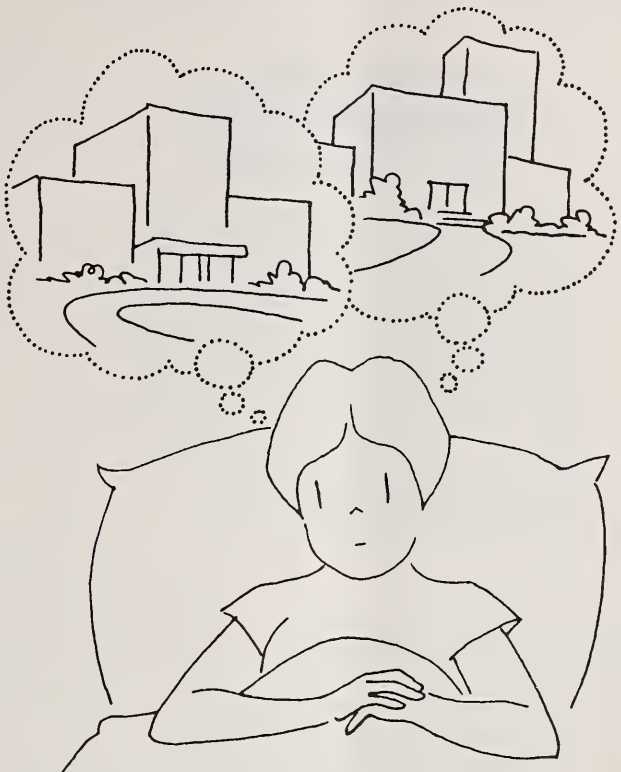
All communications and medical records (messages between you and your physician, hospital charts, test results, x-rays, etc.) must be kept private.

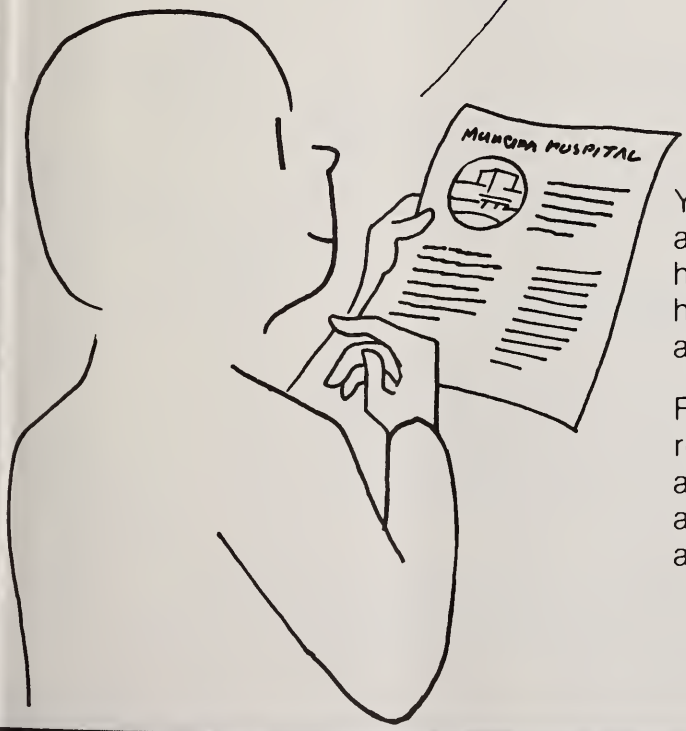
You must give permission for the release of your records for specific purposes in most cases.

ACCEPTANCE FOR TREATMENT

If you request treatment at a hospital, you shouldn't be refused or sent to another hospital without a good reason. The decision should be based on:

- whether the hospital is qualified to treat your condition
- whether the necessary equipment is available
- whether treating you could potentially endanger others
- whether your condition requires immediate treatment
- whether treatment will be of value to you.





INFORMATION ABOUT AFFILIATION

You have the right to know about any connections your hospital and physician(s) have with other institutions and physicians.

For example, if your physician recommends treatment at another institution, you have a right to ask if he or she is affiliated with that institution.

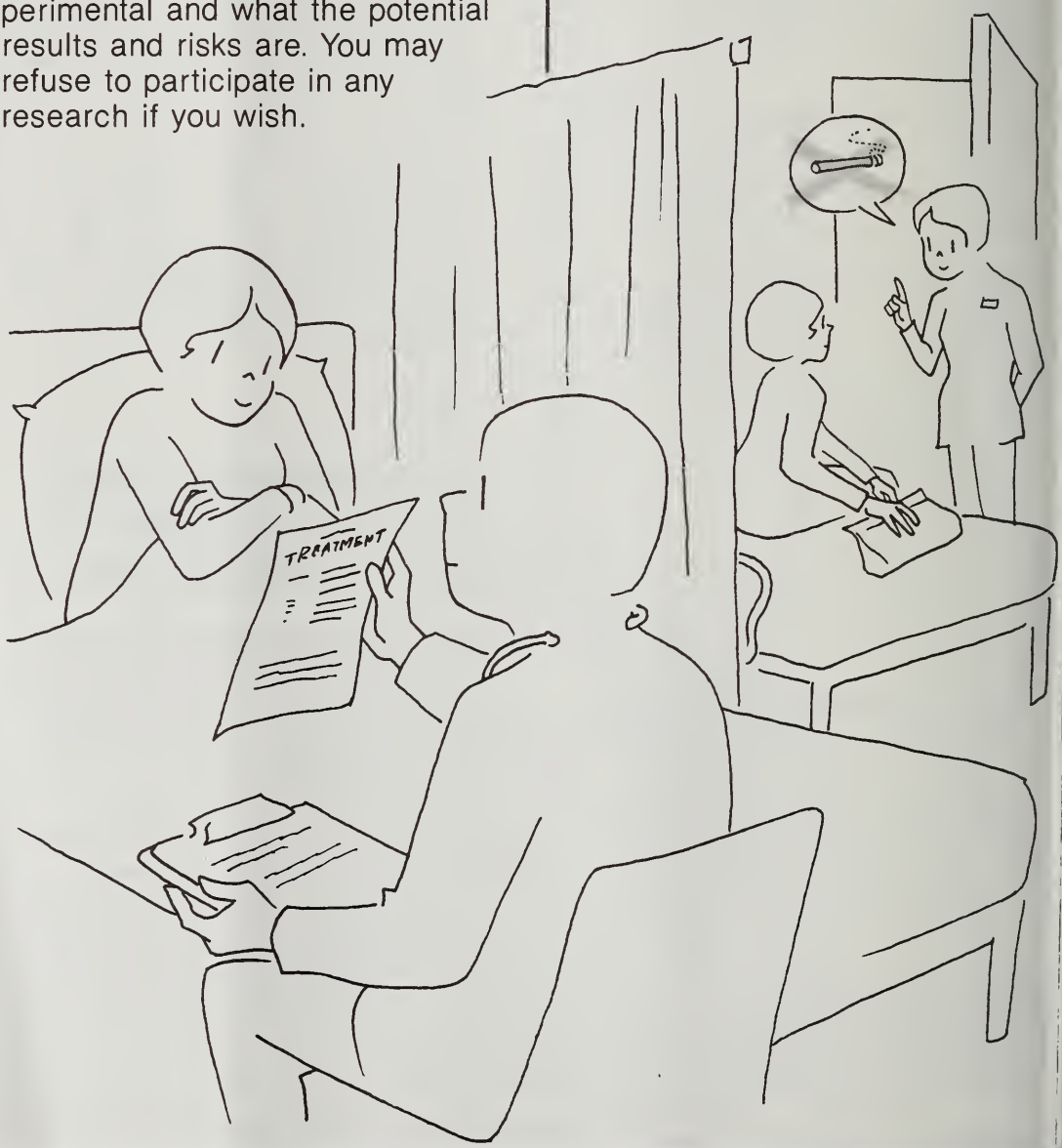
Patients have the right to:

REFUSE EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT

In some cases, physicians may recommend experimental therapies, medication or other courses of treatment. You must be told if your proposed treatment is experimental and what the potential results and risks are. You may refuse to participate in any research if you wish.

KNOWLEDGE OF HOSPITAL REGULATIONS

You should be told about the rules which govern conduct in the hospital: rules about visitors, smoking, movement in the hospital, etc.



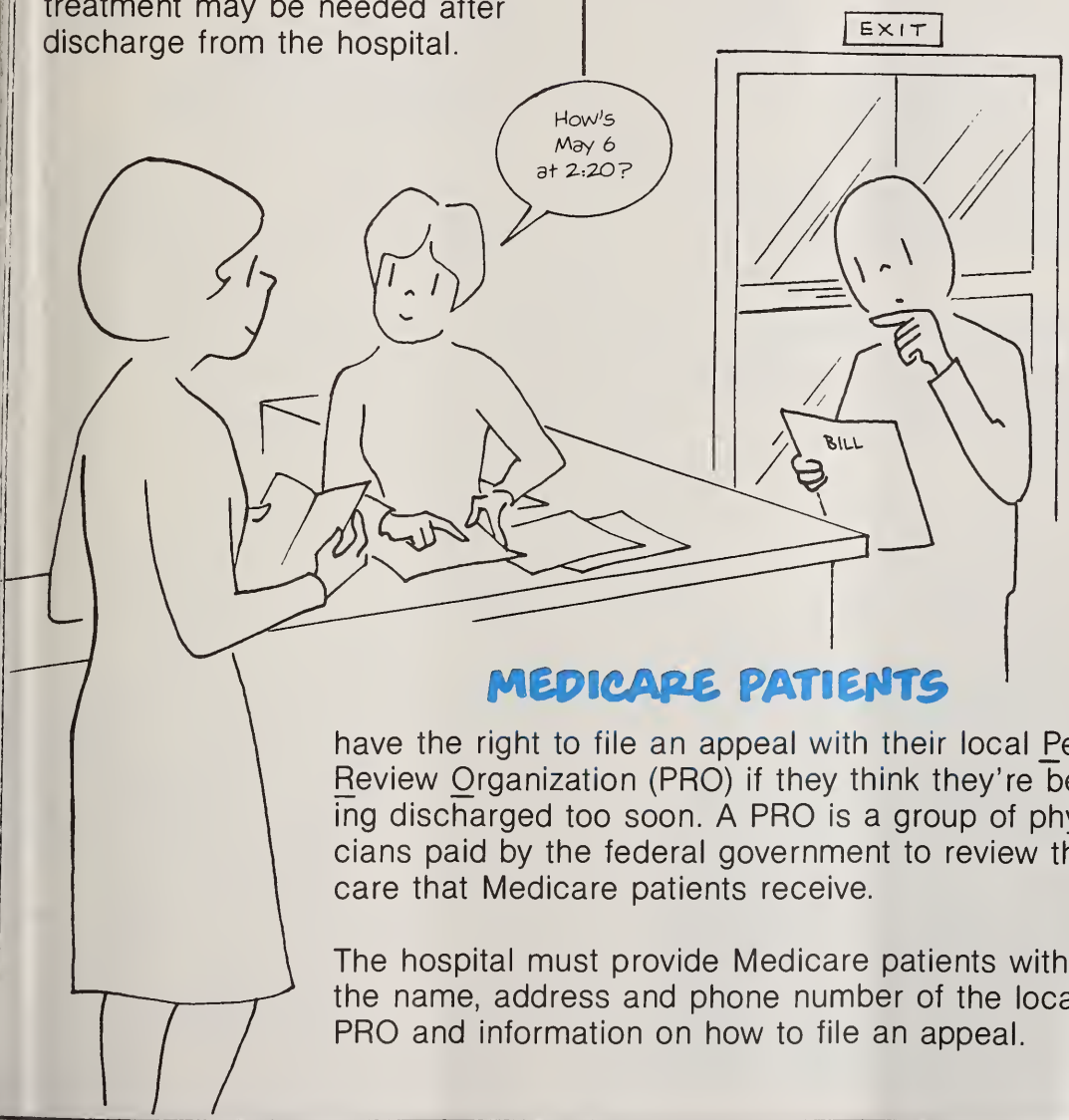
INFORMATION ABOUT CONTINUING CARE

Before scheduling any treatment, you should be told when and where a physician will be available. This may save you the trouble and expense of long waits or long trips for treatment.

You must also be told what treatment may be needed after discharge from the hospital.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR BILL

You have a right to receive a copy of your bill and to know the charges for each service you receive; which charges are billed separately; what your insurance company has been charged and has paid.



MEDICARE PATIENTS

have the right to file an appeal with their local Peer Review Organization (PRO) if they think they're being discharged too soon. A PRO is a group of physicians paid by the federal government to review the care that Medicare patients receive.

The hospital must provide Medicare patients with the name, address and phone number of the local PRO and information on how to file an appeal.

Patients also have RESPONSIBILITIES

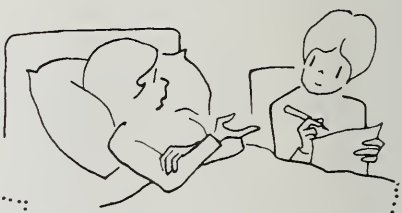
The care you receive depends partially on you.
In order to fulfill your responsibilities, you should:

ASK QUESTIONS

A physician or nurse may not know when you're confused, uncertain or just want more information. Ask any questions you have -- the staff will be pleased to answer them.

GIVE FULL INFORMATION

Tell the physician everything you can about your condition, including all symptoms, medication you're taking, previous ailments, etc.

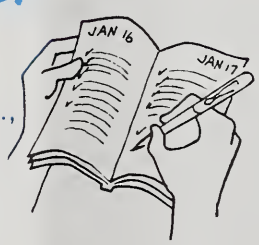


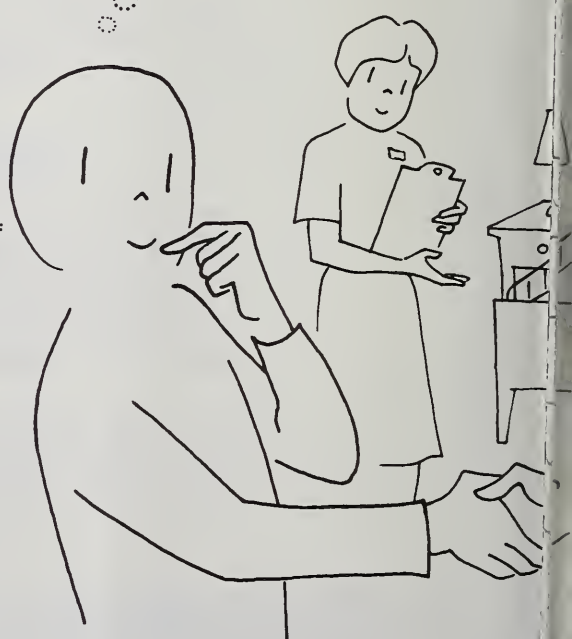
RESPECT OTHERS

The staff and other patients deserve your respect and courtesy.

PLAN CAREFULLY

Schedule tests, optional treatments, etc., in advance.





FOLLOW YOUR PHYSICIAN'S INSTRUCTIONS

Take all medication as prescribed. Listen carefully to instructions about diet, exercise, etc. Tell your physician if you're having trouble following instructions.

REPORT ANY CHANGES

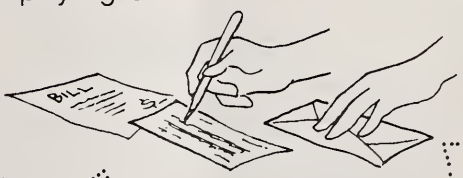
Let the physician know immediately about changes in symptoms, medication or general condition.

KEEP ALL APPOINTMENTS

If you must cancel an appointment, try to give at least 24 hours notice. Be on time for every appointment.

PAY BILLS PROMPTLY

Late payments increase overall hospital charges. Help keep hospital costs down by always paying on time.



CARRY SOME IDENTIFICATION

at all times while you're in the hospital. If you have a chronic health condition, carry a card, bracelet or tag that tells about it.

About patients' rights in

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

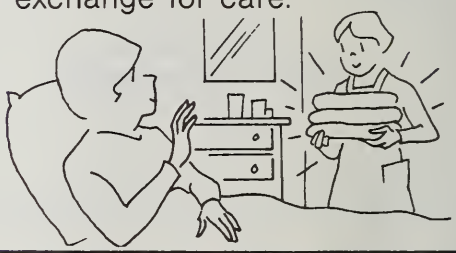
Patients in convalescent homes, nursing homes, mental hospitals and other LTCFs also have rights. In addition to the rights of hospital patients, patients at long-term care facilities have THE RIGHT TO:

VOTE

You may participate in political elections, caucuses, etc.

FREEDOM FROM SERVING

You don't have to perform any services such as delivering mail in exchange for care.



PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

You may have these if space permits and if they don't infringe on others' rights. You may wear your own clothes, unless your condition prevents it.

CHOOSE SUPPLIERS

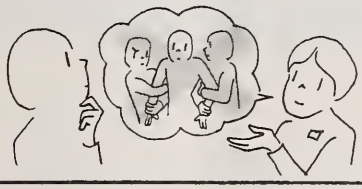
You decide whom you'll buy drugs and personal items from.

MANAGEMENT OF FINANCES

You may manage your own finances or have a family member or friend do it for you. If you want the facility to do it, you should be given an accounting at least every 3 months.

FREEDOM FROM ABUSE OR PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

However, restraint may be ordered by a physician in an emergency, but only for a specified period of time.

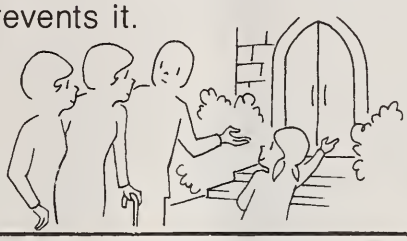


PRIVATE COMMUNICATION

Your mail may not be opened or your conversations monitored without your consent.

PARTICIPATION

You may join in any social, community or religious activities unless a medical condition prevents it.



PRIVACY

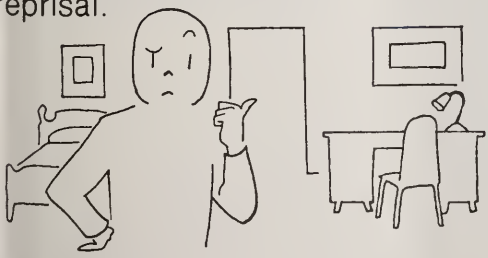
You may have time alone with all visitors, if space permits. You may share a room with your spouse if you're both patients.

INFORMATION

Before admission, you should be told your rights, the services available in the facility, and the charges for your stay and for services, if extra.

EXPRESS CONCERNS

You may voice complaints and grievances without fear of reprisal.



Maintenance of human dignity is the right of every patient in a LTCF!

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

What rights do **MINORS HAVE** ?

Generally, minors' rights are exercised by their parents, but state laws vary. Some states allow specific treatments without parental consent (for drug dependence, venereal disease, etc.).

Do rights of **MARRIED PEOPLE** differ from those of non-married people ?

Married people generally have the same rights as all individuals. In most cases, either spouse may receive treatment without the other's consent. However, some states do require spousal consent for certain procedures.

What should I do if I think my rights have been **VIOLATED** ?

Many health-care facilities have a person designated to help with any problems. Ask your physician, nurse or an administrator who you should talk to.

What about **TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS** ?

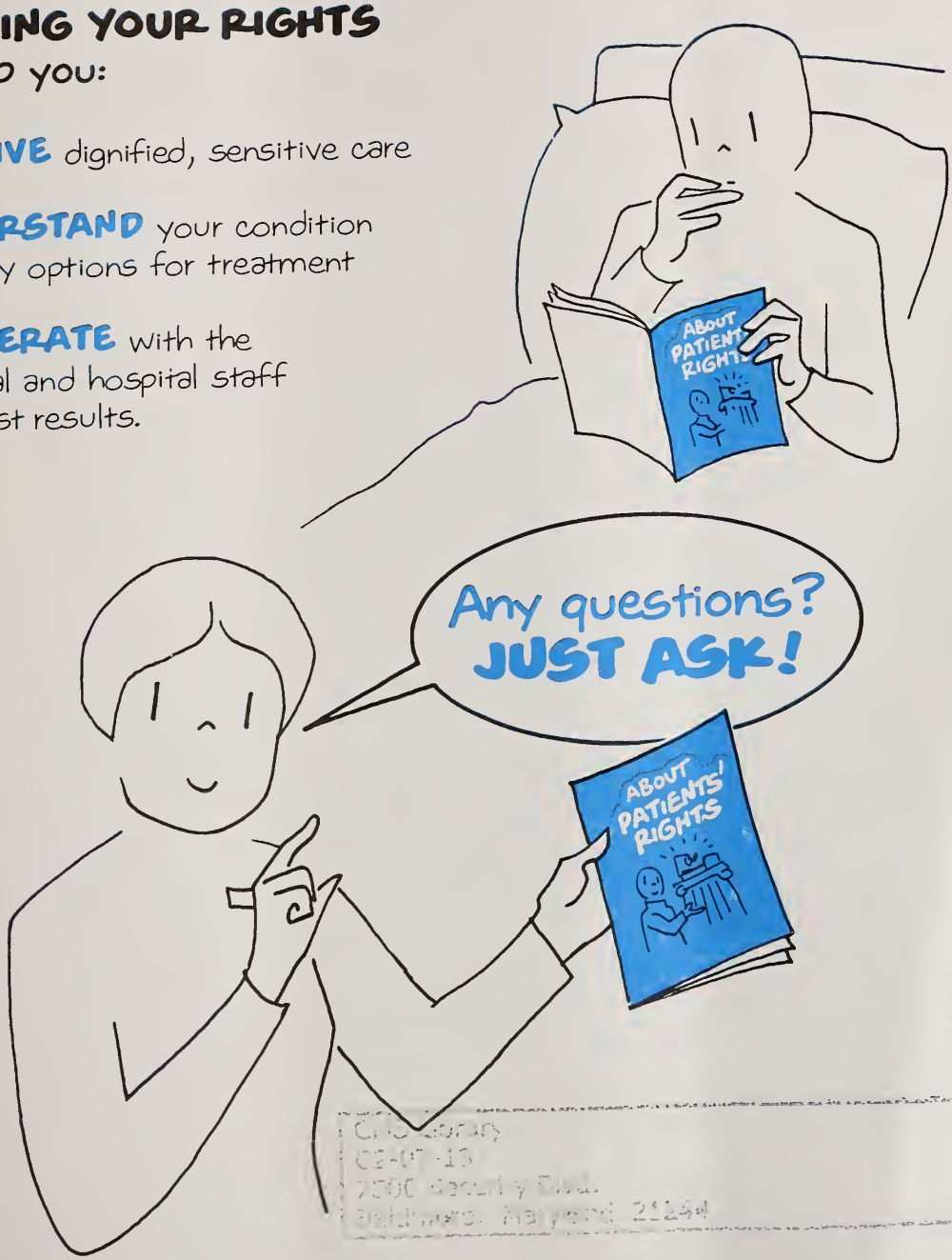
They have a right to be given complete, honest answers about their diagnosis.

Soo--

YOUR RIGHTS AS A PATIENT PROTECT YOU!

KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS can help you:

- **RECEIVE** dignified, sensitive care
- **UNDERSTAND** your condition and any options for treatment
- **COOPERATE** with the medical and hospital staff for best results.



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